

Concerning the Elimination of Funding for Medical Interpreter Services under Medicaid.

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Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee today. My name is Allison Read from the Latino Policy Institute I wish to indicate my strong opposition to the proposed elimination of funding for medical interpreters under Medicaid.

There is a client from one of the programs at the Hispanic Health Council that has experienced a medical interpretation problem. She feels uncomfortable when another patient or stranger has to interpret for the doctor, especially if it is a male interpreter. When she went to the doctor's, the nurse told her that she is sick from the liver, which was information that she had never heard prior to this visit. The client became worried and confused and wanted her doctor to explain to her the situation. She says they took liver tests, never informed her of the results, and then informed her that there was a mix up. There was someone else with the same name so there was a misunderstanding. She expressed that this is why she feels unsure, unsatisfied, worried, and frustrated. She doesn't have any confidence when she goes to her appointments. This situation could have been avoided with a trained medical interpreter who is responsible.

If there was a trained medical interpreter, testing for the wrong thing could have been avoided. Time and money from doing the tests could have been saved and put to something more useful. The patient could have been given the wrong medicine which could have made her seriously sick. This is why it is important to have trained medical interpreters who know the correct terminology and can accurately translate every word the doctor is saying. With an estimated 22,000 Medicaid recipients in Connecticut have limited English proficiency. With this amount of people, one can only imagine how many instances like written above, occur. How much money and time is wasted on misunderstandings when the misunderstandings could be prevented if we have trained medical interpreters.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.



# Connecticut Coalition for Medical Interpretation



## MEDICAID-REIMBURSED MEDICAL INTERPRETATION

### BACKGROUND

- The Connecticut Coalition for Medical Interpretation (CCMI) won legislative approval for **\$4.7 million** in the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget to pay for medical interpreters for Medicaid recipients.
- The legislation called for an amendment to the Medicaid state plan to make medical interpretation a covered service.

### NOW:

- **Governor's Rell's budget recommends cutting the \$4.7 million** for interpreters under Medicaid and eliminating the requirement amending the state Medicaid plan to include foreign language interpretation services in the health care setting as a covered service.

### WHY WE NEED MEDICAL INTERPRETATION:

- Inability to communicate with a health care provider can cause serious injury or death.

Fact: An estimated 22,000 Medicaid recipients in Connecticut have limited English proficiency.

Fact: Sixty-five different languages are spoken by low-income residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) in Connecticut.

Fact: When qualified interpreters are not available, patients and providers resort to using untrained staff, friends, or family members, including children. This can result in misdiagnosed or undiagnosed medical

conditions, delayed or inappropriate care, medical mistakes, and higher costs for the entire system, as well as compromised quality of care with regard to confidentiality and dignity.

Fact: When medical interpretation is available, Latinos report an increase of 70% in their ability to understand a doctor's instruction.

Fact: Face-to-face interpretation services provide greater cultural sensitivity in the translation, leading to improved quality of care for patients.

### THE SOLUTION:

THE CONNECTICUT LEGISLATURE SHOULD **RESTORE** FUNDING FOR MEDICAL INTERPRETATION and REQUIRE THAT MEDICAL INTERPRETATION BE ADDED TO THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN.

IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO  
IT SAVES MONEY  
IT'S THE LAW

An initiative of the Hispanic Health Council

# Connecticut Coalition for Medical Interpretation



## MEDICAID-REIMBURSED MEDICAL INTERPRETATION

### THE LAW:

- Fact:** State law requires acute care hospitals to provide interpretation for patients whose primary language is spoken by at least 5% of the population in the service area (Public Act No. 00-119) and to notify all patients of their right to participate in making informed decisions about treatment and care (Public Act No. 05-128).
- Fact:** Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act requires recipients of federal financial assistance to ensure that limited English proficient persons can meaningfully use health and social services. Any organization or individual that receives federal financial assistance, either directly or indirectly, through a grant, contract or subcontract, is covered by Title VI.

### THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER STATES:

- Fact:** The District of Columbia, along with 12 states (including Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont), provide reimbursement for interpreter services through the Medicaid program.
- Fact:** In Maine and New Hampshire, only 2% and 2.4%, respectively, of the states' total population have limited English proficiency (compared with Connecticut's 4.6%).

### COALITION MEMBERS:

AARP, Asian Family Services, Catholic Charities, Connecticut Association for United Spanish Action, Charter Oak Health Center, China Communications Consultants, Inc., Community Renewal Team, Connecticut Area Health Education Centers, Connecticut Primary Care Association, Connecticut Voices for Children, Generations Family Health Center, Inc., Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc., Hartford Areas Rally Together, Health Care for All Coalition, Hill Health Center, Hispanic Center of Danbury, Hispanic Health Council, Interpreters and Translators, Inc., Khmer Health Advocates, Lao Association of Connecticut, Latino Community Services, Mijoba Communications, Inc., Naugatuck Valley Project, Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, SEIU Local 32BJ, Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain

### About The Latino Policy Institute

The Latino Policy Institute, a project of the Hispanic Health Council, was created to help Connecticut's Latino communities help themselves. With the institute's leadership and expert technical support, the Latino community will define its healthcare needs, develop policy recommendations to help meet those needs and join forces to advocate for changes that will improve the health and well-being of Latinos across Connecticut.

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